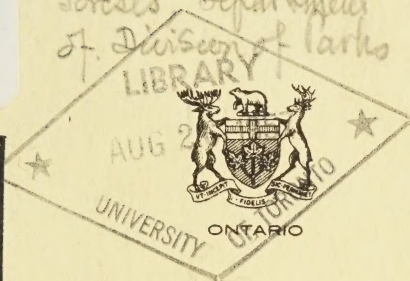


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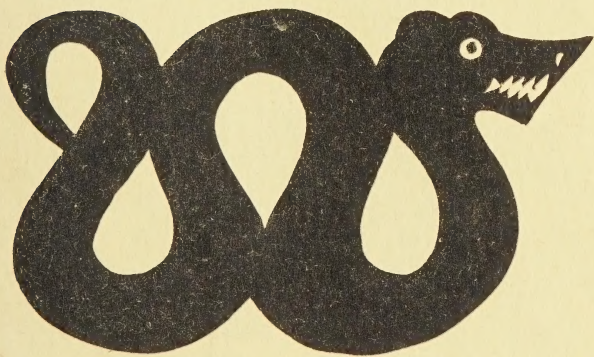


serpent

mounds

provincial

park



ONTARIO DEPARTMENT OF LANDS AND FORESTS

Hon. Clare E. Mapledoram  
Minister

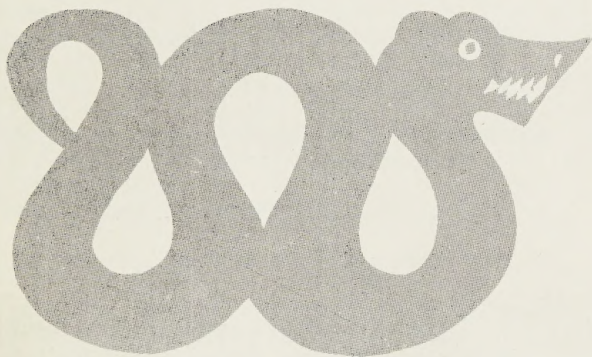
F. A. MacDougall  
Deputy Minister



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# SERPENT MOUNDS

## PROVINCIAL PARK



**ONTARIO DEPARTMENT  
OF LANDS AND FORESTS**

*Hon. Clare E. Mapledoram*  
*Minister*

*F. A. MacDougall*  
*Deputy Minister*

WELCOME  
TO ONE OF ONTARIO'S PROVINCIAL PARKS

To make your visit a pleasant experience certain regulations are necessary for the protection of the Park and your enjoyment of it. These are set out in detail and may be obtained upon request.

You, as a good outdoorsman, are asked to set the example.

1. Do not remove, deface, or damage any plant, tree, sign, building, structure, natural object, table, bench, or any other property.
2. Do not throw or dump refuse, garbage, or any other litter. Use the receptacles provided.
3. Keep the dog or other pet on a leash not exceeding 6 feet in length.
4. Park your car in the parking area.
5. Have your picnic in the picnic area.
6. Keep your camp-site clean. Leave it in the condition in which you would like to find it.
7. BE CAREFUL WITH FIRE. Carelessly discarded cigarettes, matches, and pipe ashes are dangerous. Be sure they are dead out. Build your fire in the fireplace. Make sure it is out before you leave.
8. Avoid picking wildflowers. Leave them for others to enjoy.
9. Firearms and hunting are prohibited.



# DIGGING UP THE PAST

Archaeology has been called the "stones and bones science". Actually it is the study of material remains of past human life and activities. These remains include every tangible object which was part of the particular culture, such as bones, pieces of pottery tools, weapons, and numerous other objects which show what man was like, how he lived, what he ate, how he was clothed and where he originated. In general, these remains tell us the way of life of early man.

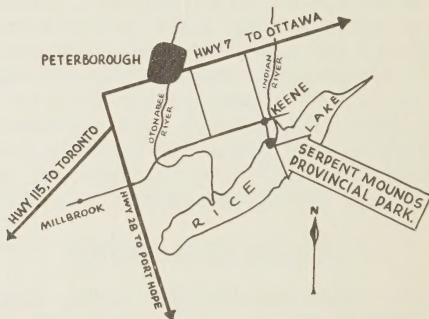
Usually, digging up the past has been associated with storied cities and ancient treasures, but it also includes the study of primitive man, whose wealth could have been measured only in clay pots and stone arrow points. Gradually the excavations and studies are uncovering man's early history, and piecing together the picture of his origin and development.

## THE DIGGING BEGINS

The Serpent Mounds Site, a dozen miles southeast of Peterborough by highway and good country roads, and two miles south of the Village of Keene, contains evidence of an early civilization in Ontario. The group of earthen mounds on a hill overlooking the waters and marshes of Rice Lake has been recognized for many decades to be historically significant. The Indians of the area have accorded them great respect. The people of Peterborough and Otonabee Township have always referred to them as "Serpent Mounds" because the largest is in the form of a serpent.

Although the Mounds have long held local interest, nothing much was done to carry out a scientific excavation of the site.

Some attempts were made in earlier years, but not until 1955 when the area was officially declared an "Historic Site", did interest develop with material results. With the creation of the area as a Provincial Park under the administration of the Ontario Department of Lands and Forests in 1956, and the formation of the Serpent Mounds Foundation of Peterborough, came the beginning of the work of serious excavation.

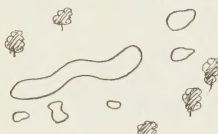


Due to the efforts of the Serpent Mounds Foundation which finances the actual digging and to the Art and Archaeology Division of the Royal Ontario Museum, which carried out the operation the excavation began in the summer of 1956.

The archaeological investigation now being undertaken is unfolding the history of Canada, for the Serpent Mounds are visual evidence of a civilization which flourished in this par-

ticular place more than 2000 years ago. At the time Julius Caesar was conquering Britain, there were people at Serpent Mounds growing corn, bartering silver, performing religious rites and burying their dead in these same Mounds. This was 1000 years before the Norsemen sailed to North America and 1500 years before Columbus made his trip westward!

It had been thought that the Mounds perhaps dated from about the time of Champlain, the French explorer and Founder of Quebec, who, in 1616 passed through this area with a war party. After examination of ashes and specimens found in the area, however, it was realized that an older native civilization underlay that of the more recent Iroquois.



Plan Sketch of the Mounds

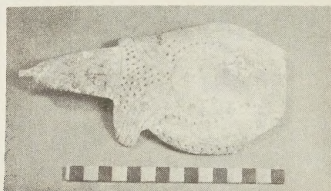
Some pieces picked up in the Rice Lake area and now in the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, showed links with a wide area and a remote period. There were carved shells which could have come from only a sub-tropical region like Florida. There was copper from Lake Superior and obsidian from the far west. The Mounds themselves are thought to have had religious significance.

Unauthorized digging and the removal of objects is now officially forbidden. Preliminary excavation in 1955

by the Royal Ontario Museum indicates that the mound builders of Rice Lake possessed a now extinct culture referred to by archaeologists as Hopewellian.

### THE HOPEWELLIAN CULTURE

Of all the Indian peoples who have come and gone in the prehistory of North America north of Mexico, none surpassed the Hopewellians. Indeed, no other native culture, taken in its entirety, was the equal of theirs, however splendid it may have been in some particular achievement. Peterborough County, and indeed all Ontario, is exceedingly fortunate to have an example of their work.



Incised shell gorget  
Princess Mound - Rice Lake

The Hopewellians were not the first inhabitants of the Peterborough and Rice Lake region. They were preceded by peoples now only dimly discernible in the mists of the nearly obscured past; peoples known only by names used by modern scientists, because no one living knows what they called themselves.

While human beings have been living in North America for at least 20,000 years, the Hopewellians are not that old. Recent dating by the Carbon 14 method indicates that their culture



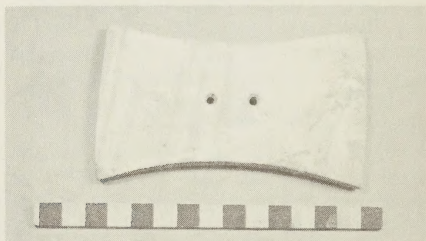
was flourishing in the upper Ohio Valley and across to Illinois about 2000 years ago. The Hopewellian Culture has a wider distribution in North America than any other native culture, either before or since. Indians shared it from southern Canada to the Gulf of Mexico and from Iowa to Florida.

Just as the Hopewell culture had a wider distribution than any other, so also it was the most spectacular of any the continent ever saw. It had many facets to intrigue the student. The people - again we do not know what language they spoke - were evidently farmers in a small way; perhaps they were the first to bring Indian corn, beans and squash to the northern parts of the continent. They wove textiles out of the fibres of milkweed and wore them as garments; some of these had patterns woven in, others were printed. For personal adornment they had, besides their woven cloth, such accessories as strings of pearls from river clams, beads, ear plugs and ornaments of copper, silver and shell. Out of copper they also often made large and elaborate headdresses, using a framework of some other material, such as horn or wood. They cut large ornaments from sheets of mica, and out of obsidian or volcanic glass. They fashioned complicated and beautiful ceremonial objects like gigantic arrow points and effigy figures.

Doubtless they made other interesting things to wear, to bury with the dead, and for their ceremonies, out of perishable materials, such as wood, bone and horn. These have not

survived for us to see, but those objects which have endured make it quite plain that the Hopewellians were master craftsmen, deeply appreciative of beauty of form and material.

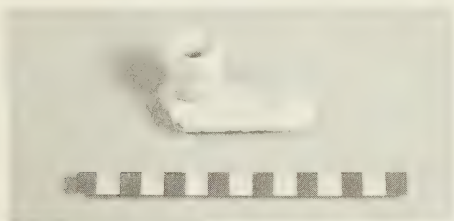
The Hopewellians must have been rather elaborately organized as a society, if we can judge from the evidence of a developed religion, and from the size of the earthen structures which they left. These are mostly in the form of mounds for covering the burial of their dead, but they could not have been built at all without the help of a very considerable number of people bound together in the belief that to build them was both necessary and worthwhile. That, in turn, implies a coherence of society, and a religious bond among the members.



Onyx gorget, with two perforations  
Princess Mound - Rice Lake

Precisely what our Serpent Mounds are like we will not know until they have been carefully excavated. If we can work on an analogy with those in Ohio and elsewhere, they may contain (1) log chambers where the dead were buried; (2) burial or prepared areas; (3) cremations, or (4) probably all of these. With the dead, the survivors were accustomed to place such things as they considered the dead might need or could use in the after life.

The Rice Lake Mounds were first recognized by Mr. David Boyle, the first Director of the Ontario Provincial Museum, about 1895. Some later excavations in both the serpentine mound and certain of the accessory mounds adjacent to it were made. Unfortunately, the reports left are insufficiently detailed for us to learn from them precisely what was done and what was found. They tell us, however, that some pottery was discovered, together with cremated burials, and a few secondary burials, i.e., burials made in the mounds after they were finished. The latter were due, no doubt, to a much later people than the Hopewellians. Certain subsequent cultures are known to have older mounds for burial purposes, and sometimes are referred to as the "Intrusive Mound Culture" which, however, is not quite a scientific designation.



Monitor type of tobacco pipe, in stone  
Cameron's Point Mounds, Rice Lake

In any event, the Serpent Mound group on Rice Lake is, so far as we know, a relic of the Hopewellian culture which flourished in Eastern North America twenty centuries ago. It is, however, the most northern manifestation of it, and can claim the distinction of being one of two or three "serpent" mounds left by the culture.

In other words, the group is distinguished first by its extreme northern location and second by its unique form. Canada is indeed fortunate in possessing it. We are also fortunate that it has been preserved so long with relatively little damage.

### PARK AND 'DIG'

The first people to become concerned about the Serpent Mounds were the members of the Hiawatha Band of Mississauga Indians who lived on a reservation a few miles west of the mouth of the Indian River. They regarded the mound with veneration, and acquired it by purchase in 1933. In 1952 the Royal Ontario Museum obtained permission from the Hiawatha Band to do some exploratory digging near the mounds, and a small area was excavated. Not enough, however, was learned at that time to justify a report.



Necklet of copper and silver beads  
Cameron's Point Mounds, Rice Lake

The Department of Lands and Forests created a new Parks Division in 1954, with a programme to make many provincial tracts of land into public playgrounds and pleasure areas. The Serpent Mounds ground, with its high, sweeping view of Rice Lake, was one of the Department's first choices, and



negotiations were begun in 1955 between the Provincial Government and the Indian Band. Also in that year another Museum field party conducted the first accurate survey of the Mounds.

It was also apparent that to investigate the Mounds properly a long-term programme of four or five years would be essential. Museum officials have seen enough evidence to know of their importance in Canadian pre-history, and they hoped for a full field programme. The Serpent Mounds Foundation of Peterborough was formed in March, 1956, for the purpose of furthering interest in the programme and in raising funds for the excavation.

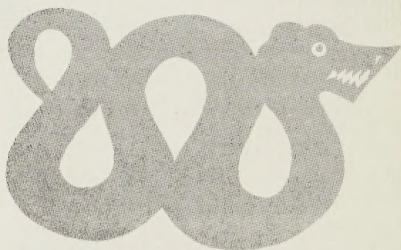
By membership drives, tag days, sizable grants from businesses, industries, individuals, municipal and provincial governments, sufficient funds were raised to start a three-month programme which got under way on June 18th, 1956, under the guidance of the Royal Ontario Museum.

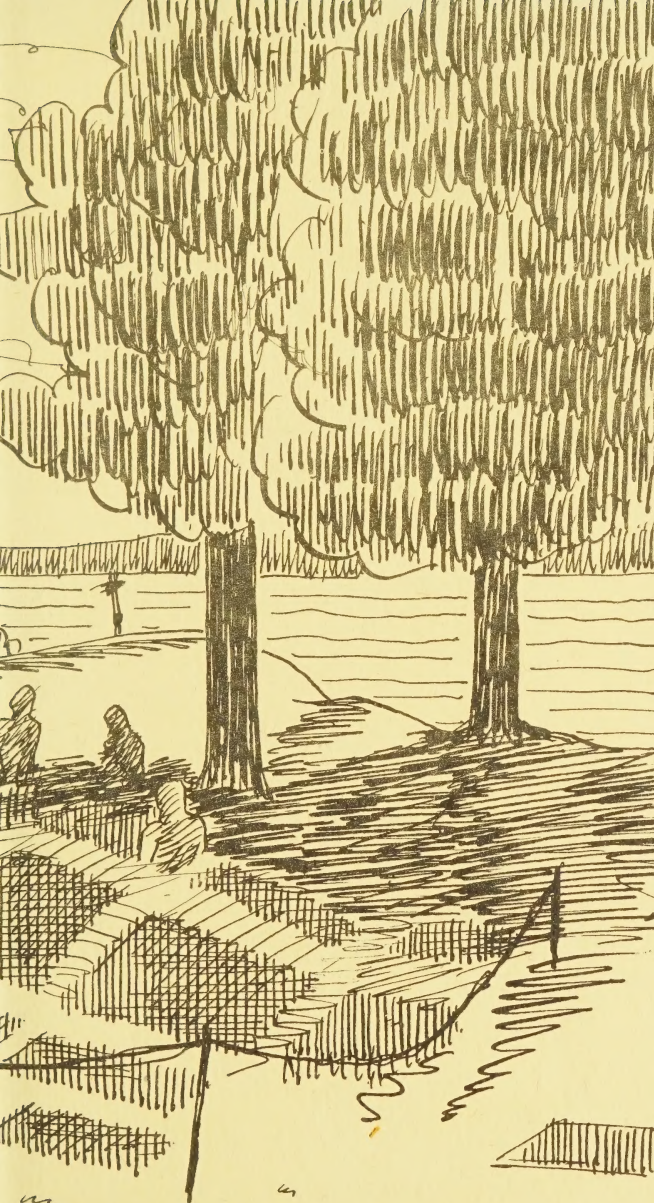
Meanwhile the Division of Parks of the Ontario Department of Lands and Forests is proceeding with a master plan to develop Serpent Mounds Provincial Park into one of the finest of its kind in the Province, with the added attraction that it incorporates the only burial effigy mound in Canada. The development of the Park includes landscaping and the building of parking lots, picnic, camping and rest facilities. Thousands of sturdy tree plantings have been laid out, and over

the years the building of a community commissary, a boathouse and a museum display will be carried out.

In cooperation with the Royal Ontario Museum and Serpent Mounds Foundation, the Department of Lands and Forests has provided an Interpretive Service for park visitors. A member of the staff is available during the summer to explain the excavation and to describe what is known of the Mounds. Outdoor exhibit cases display objects removed from the Mounds, and photographs, sketches and maps help to illustrate this early culture.

If the Serpent Mounds park had nothing more than its superb view, it would be an attractive park. It has the burial ground, however, and the secrets that they will reveal will fill some of the blank pages in the prehistory of Canada. They will tell something of a civilization that was highly organized when Julius Caesar's soldiers were invading Britain.





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